

Massachusetts Statewide Community Transportation Coordination Conference May 5, 2015

Three Models of Travel Instruction

Travel instruction means teaching a senior, person with disability, or other person all the knowledge and skills they need to ride public transit independently and safely. Travel instruction can be provided by transit authorities, human service agencies, and schools (especially in special education or transition settings).

Three presenters:

- Teri Koopman, Mobility Services Coordinator/Mobility Trainer, Pioneer Valley Transit Authority
- Linda Shepard Salzer, Ways2Go Travel Trainer
- Mark Miller, Program Coordinator, ACHIEVE Program, Natick Public Schools

Teri Koopman

- When PVTA first wanted to start a travel training program, they got a New Freedom Grant and hired the Kennedy Center (provides travel training in CT and trains organizations on how to offer travel training) to help them put together the program. Koopman shadowed travel trainers in Connecticut to learn how.
- Initially, PVTA's program focused on one-on-one training.
- They did marketing to raise awareness of the program. Eventually they got enough referrals to hire another travel trainer.
- Most referrals have been external (e.g. from human service agencies). Only 20% have been from PVTA's ADA paratransit department. They have had 260 referrals in 2.5 years.
- They keep in close contact with referring agencies about a trainee's progress.
- Koopman works for an RTA directly, which gives her the advantage of a relationship with drivers:
 - Drivers give extra attention to the people she trains
 - Gets detour info
 - Access to bus passes, photo IDs
- Koopman shared a success story of a transition student who was very anxious about riding the bus because he worried it would not come back if he got off. PVTA's travel trainers planned special trips where they could see the bus coming right back. The individual overcame the anxiety and enthusiastically proclaimed that driver to be the best driver ever.

Linda Shepard Salzer

- Way2Go is a project of Door2Door by SCM, which is a non-profit, door-to-door transportation provider. They have a contract with the MBTA to provide travel training on the MBTA system.
- System orientation training is a half-day program with classroom and hands-on components to introduce trainees to the MBTA system and accessibility features. Ways2Go can often use the MBTA Emergency Training Center to orient trainees to different types of MBTA vehicles. Sometimes they use Alewife Station, where buses and trains have a layover.
- They also provide one-on-one training also for seniors and people with disabilities. The majority of their trainees are transition age (21-22). Trainers meet individuals where they are, geographically and knowledge/capability-wise. They use a curriculum with 12 lessons such as crossing the street, riding the bus, etc. They can individualize lessons for the specific needs of

the individual. They also have “games” (playing memory with photos of crosswalks, traffic lights, etc., which opens up discussions about safe travel skills).

- They work with people with visual impairments if the trainee has already completed O&M and just needs to learn a route but are solid in their O&M skills. Otherwise usually they refer people with visual impairments to the Mass Commission for the Blind (MCB) for O&M training.

Mark Miller

- ACHIEVE is a transition program for students ages 18-22. Students take public transportation an average of three times per week. Students use transit to get to community locations such as Planet Fitness. They get students interested by taking trips to locations that they will enjoy or are excited about.
- ACHIEVE provides individualized training to help students learn the skills they need and then learn the routes. They make podcasts and videos to help students learn the route and know when to get off the bus. However, one student got too engrossed in the video, so they had to make a flip book instead for that student.
- Miller also goes into the high school to the special education classes. Currently goes to the 11th and 12th grades but he is hoping to expand to 9th and 10th as well.
- Learning moment: one student boarded the wrong bus because the bus driver he was used to had switched routes that day. The student had seemed to be doing everything correctly but was actually recognizing the bus by its driver, not the bus route number.